

Conservation values

Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands



At nearly 50 birds per hectare during peak times the wetlands support one of the highest concentrations of waterbirds in Western Australia

Image courtesy Kim Williams

The conservation values of the Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands are recognised on a local, state, national and international level. The wetlands support many thousands of native Australian and migratory water bird species as well as the largest breeding population of black swans in the state. Areas surrounding the wetlands provide habitat for threatened and priority species such as the iconic western ringtail possum and Carnaby's black cockatoo. The neighbouring Tuart Forest National Park contains many magnificent tuart trees which provide nesting hollows and roosting sites for marsupials and birds including ducks, ibis, spoonbills and egrets, and birds of prey such as white-bellied sea eagles, ospreys and swamp harriers.



Ramsar status

The Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands were recognised as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention in 1990. The Convention was established in 1971 as the first modern international treaty designed to conserve internationally important wetlands through wise use and effective management.

The Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands meet two of the possible nine Ramsar criteria:

Criterion 5: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20 000 or more waterbirds.

Criterion 6: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports one per cent of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.

Regular bird surveys have recorded over 37 000 waterbirds using the wetlands on a single day and they support over one per cent of the population of Australian shelduck, Australasian shoveler, red-necked avocet and black-winged stilt

Image courtesy Kim Williams

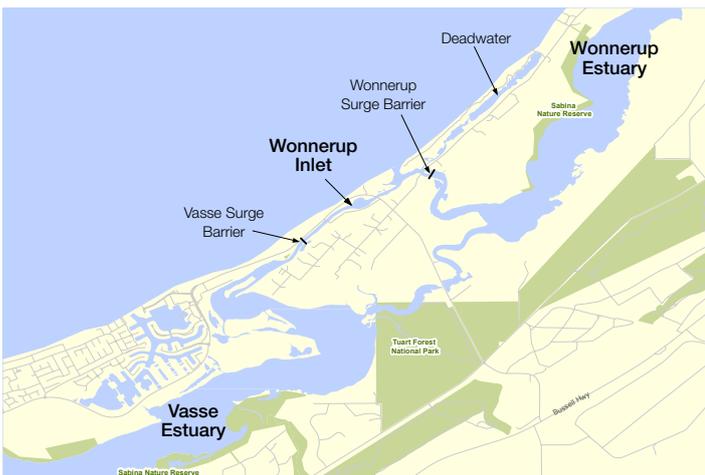


International migratory shorebirds

More than 90 species of birds have been recorded using the Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands. This includes migratory shorebirds that use the wetlands during the summer months to replenish their energy stores before returning to the northern hemisphere to breed.

There are 31 species of shorebirds that are listed on four international conservation treaties to which Australia is a signatory. Many shorebird populations are declining through the loss of habitat.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife, in partnership with Birdlife Australia, undertakes annual counts of shorebird species at major wetlands across Western Australia, including the Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands, under the Australian Shorebirds 2020 Project.



Other conservation values

The Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands and its tributaries are host to a special type of salt-tolerant succulent - the Samphire. These unusual looking plants are highly adapted to life in the salt marshes and can be seen within broad expanses of open water and on the fringes of wetlands. Samphires in the Vasse-Wonnerup are a nationally listed threatened ecological community and play an important role in supporting nesting waterbirds, creating habitat for aquatic invertebrates and providing a link between terrestrial and aquatic plant communities.

Image courtesy Kim Williams



What the future holds

Maintaining and improving the conservation values of the wetlands is a high priority. Declining water quality, invasion of weeds and feral animals and climate change threaten the conservation values of the wetlands. These threats are intensified by the impacts associated with being close to an urban setting, such as rubbish dumping and off-road vehicles.

The continued monitoring of waterbirds and their habitat is essential to preserve its Ramsar listing. Enhancing our knowledge and understanding of how water levels and salinity influence feeding and nesting habits, along with species abundance and seasonal preferences, will be critical to future management decisions.

More information

More information about the Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands is available under Resources on the GeoCatch website.

www.geocatch.asn.au

Be involved

Community members will have the opportunity to be involved in the development of a management plan for the Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands. Opportunities will be promoted on the GeoCatch website or contact GeoCatch.



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